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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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OWNER OF AUTO TRANSPORT COMPANY INDICTED

SACRAMENTO - United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott and Shasta County District Attorney Jerry Benito announced today that a federal grand jury returned a twelve count indictment charging BILLY D. SOUTHERLAND, 62, of Anderson, California, with Mail Fraud and Wire Fraud.

This case is the result of a joint investigation by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Inspector General, and the Shasta County District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Matthew Stegman, who is prosecuting the case, the indictment alleges that from December, 2001, through January 29, 2004, Southerland advertised his auto moving business on the Internet, using website names such as MovingMyCar.com, to people who needed to have their cars transported from one city to another. Customers would send money to the defendant's business believing that their vehicles would be picked up for a specified price within 7 to 10 days. Southerland would fail to perform as promised, and would refuse to refund some or all of the customer's money, claiming it to be a "non-refundable deposit."

It is also alleged in the indictment that Southerland engaged in "bait and switch" tactics, by offering below market rates to lure potential customers. After customers complain that their cars are not moved, Southerland and his employees would tell the customers to pay more money to "upgrade" for express pickup priority.

It is also alleged that he engaged in tactics designed to prevent dissatisfied customers from complaining to law enforcement or the Better Business Bureau by threatening to charge an additional \$150 or \$200 above the "non-refundable \$200 deposit" to customers who file complaints with law enforcement or the Better Business Bureau.

If convicted, the maximum penalty under federal law for each offense of Mail Fraud and Wire Fraud is 20 years in federal custody.

The charges are only allegations and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Customers of Southerland Auto Transport who wish to make a report regarding this case should contact Investigations at the U.S. Department of Transportation at (415) 744-2521. Attached is a notice to customers regarding Southerland Auto Transport, which can be found at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae/home/>. After you are in, click on Press Releases.

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